

PBC: Focused Observation

[Music]

Girl: One more, and three make four.

Narrator: Practice-based coaching supports educators to implement a targeted set of teaching practices. The cycle of shared goals and action planning, focused observation, and reflection and feedback helps teachers think about what they want to implement, how to do a better job implementing, and supports for continual growth in that effort. After identifying a goal and planning for implementation, a teacher and his or her coach engage in a focused observation.

Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter: We see focused observation as a critical part of coaching because we know that one of the components of coaching that is most likely to lead to change in practice is the provision of feedback. And the kind of feedback we give, it's important to anchor that in the teacher practice. So it's important to be able to say, "Today I saw you do this. You might want to try to do this the next time." And you can only do that if you've done a really good job observing.

Coach: Even if they know that's three, they might know that's three, but do they recognize that as three?

Narrator: A good observation is grounded in the collaborative teacher-coach partnership.

Dr. Crystal Bishop: Focused observations are always driven by those shared goals and the action plan that we've written with the teacher. So generally, you know, we spend a lot of time on that first part and really coming together and deciding what is it that we're going to focus on. And then for me, the action plan kind of helps drive what the focused observation will be centered on, but also really the teacher drives that. So anytime I'm getting ready to go and observe in a teacher's classroom, I always say to the teacher, "When do you want me to come, and what do you want me to look for?"

Niki Webber: Okay, you guys, so today we have a new material that we're going to have out on the tables when we go back to do our drawings.

Narrator: Not only tightly focused and teacher-driven, but also supportive, providing educators another lens to see their practices and how children respond to them.

Niki: They weren't in there giving me bad looks from the corner. It was very encouraging, and I think probably once we had that first sit-down session after class, it was just very comfortable, and I felt -- I felt comfortable having them in my classroom, and I could see that they were in there to help me to make my classroom as successful as possible. Soleil Boyd: You get used to it, and after you do it a few times and you have that nice relationship with your coach, it feels pretty natural. And I'm always really interested to know what my coach is going to say afterwards.

Tiffany Powers: As a coach, you're going into the same classrooms, because you're building the relationships with the teachers, but you're also building relationships with the children. They're getting to know you, getting comfortable with you so that if you ever need to model something in the classroom, it's not awkward, because the kids already know you. So I'm just going to kind of walk through what I saw as far as teacher-child interactions.

Narrator: A focused observation doesn't mean a coach with a clipboard in the corner of a classroom. While note-taking may take place, other strategies are also used during observations.

Denise Binder: We can use lots of different strategies during the observation, depending on what the teacher feels comfortable with. I've gone in and led the lesson. If she's not sure how to kick it off, I will do that for her, I'll model how to do it. Sometimes I can stand back and just do some kind of gestures or point to the things that she's supposed to use when she's supposed to use them. I can sit by specific targeted kids and help them to focus on the lesson if that's kind of what's needed.

Niki: They did everything across the board. They would sit with us and they would do side-by-side modeling, where we would be at a table interacting with the kids during an activity. And I would be able to watch them, the way that they were using -- you know, talking with the kids and furthering conversation, expanding vocabulary, the types of questions that they would be asking. There were times when they would step back and just be taking notes. But a lot of what we had talked about, especially with my coaching, is that I liked having modeling in my classroom, so that that way I could see how things really looked and how it played out.

Narrator: Focused observation might also include a focused lens, literally.

Dr. Kathleen Artman Meeker: Video is a really powerful tool for coaching. And I know even for myself in live coaching partnerships, where I go in to work with a teacher in the classroom, I observe in the classroom, having video that the teacher can watch of her own practices, supplementing that kind of live, maybe expert coaching model, can be really powerful. To step back and watch yourself and see your interactions is really kind of instantly a focused observation. It really helps you kind of narrow in on what's going on in your classroom and see things maybe in a different way.

Niki: Because we don't want to get it on our clothes or get it on the table or anything else.

Narrator: Whether it's video, side-by-side modeling, data collection, or another strategy, focused observation also helps the coach prepare for reflection and feedback conversations that follow with her teacher.

Katie Eide: So if your goal is to increase engagement in group time, in large group time, I'm going to come in during your large group time and I'm going to be taking notes on what's happening during that large group time, really focusing on the engagement of the children -- what the teacher is doing and what the children are doing during that time. And then I write kind of notes to myself as a coach as I'm going through. Then usually because of that focused observation, I don't have to be there the whole class time. I usually take some time to step out, do some reflection on my own, and then come -- we -- the teacher and I meet together as soon as possible after that and we review the focused observation. And I go through and say, "So these are the things that are happening, and here are the things that I'm wondering. What did you notice?"

Soleil: And then when I watched the video, I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I've been reading for minutes. This is crazy."

Narrator: Focused observation is a critical component of practice-based coaching. By providing on-site support, the coach collects information and supports the teacher in preparing for reflection and feedback meetings.

[Music]

[End video]